Comparison Of Bacchae Essay, Research Paper

Comparison Of Bacchae and Hippolytus

In the plays Bacchae and Hippolytus, many similarities and differences exist between the relationships of the characters. One similarity between the relationship of Pentheus and Dionysus in Bacchae and that of Hippolytus and Aphrodite in Hippolytus are the tragedies caused by the gods to these characters. These tragedies are caused by the lack of respect towards the gods. In both the plays, there is hostility between the divine and human characters. In both the plays, the god speaks the opening lines and expresses anger at not being worshipped. In Bacchae, Dionsysus puts a curse on his mother s sisters because they do not believe in his divinity. In Bacchae, Pentheus does not believe in the divinity of Dionsyus. There is a redundant parallel in Hippolytus. Hippolytus does not worship Aphrodite, and this leads to Aphrodite putting a curse on Hippolytus step-mother Phaedra. An example of the curse in Bacchae is when Dionysus says, for this I drove the sisters from their homes, forcing them, brainstruck, to wander on the hills and made them wear my Bacchic orgies gear . An example of the curse in Hippolytus is when Aphrodite says, I shall punish Hippolytus this day. Once he came from Pittheus to the country of Pandion Phaedra saw him and her heart was filled with the longings of love. This is important because it shows the revengeful aspect of the gods in the character relationships of the two plays. In Bacchae, Pentheus does not respect Dionsyus. In Hippolytus, Hippolytus does not respect Aphrodite. Therefore, this leads Dionsyus to get revenge on Pentheus, and Aphrodite to get revenge on Hippolytus.

Another similarity exists between the relationships of Dionsyus-Pentheus and Aphrodite-Hippolytus. Both Pentheus and Hippolytus suffer in these plays because of the gods scheming behavior. In Bacchae, Agave and the other sisters tear Pentheus apart, reveling in the blood and the body parts. This madness of the sisters is caused by Dionsyus curse. This is seen when the messenger says, she caught his left arm, just below the shoulder, and bracing against his ribs, she ripped it out from the shoulder socket. Ino wrenched hard at Pentheus other arm, and tore his flesh apart. There is a redundant parallel of suffering that occurs in Hippolytus. Hippolytus dies because his father thinks he raped his step-mother and caused him to commit suicide. This can be seen when the messenger in Bacchae says, he cried aloud and terrible his voice rang in our ears: stand, horses, stand! Do not kill me! My fathers curse! His curse! Hippolytus father, Theseus puts a curse on him even though he s actually innocent. All these events are caused by Aphrodite s curse on Phaedra. In both the relationships, the gods act in a devious manner.

The difference between the character relationships is that Dionsyus actually comes to earth to prove his divinity. His relationship with Pentheus is different than the Aphrodite-Hippolytus relationship because he comes to earth to manipulate Pentheus. An example of this is when Dionysus convinces Pentheus to put on the clothes of a Maenad and go with him to the mountain. At this point, Pentheus is beginning to crack under the hypnotic manipulation of the god. When he goes to the mountain, his own mother Agave kills him. Aphrodite shows her power from the background. She puts a curse on Hippolytus and watches the developing action.

In both Bacchae and Hippolytus, anthropomorphic qualities are maximized. In Bacchae, Dionsyus came in human form and had many human characteristics. One characteristic of the gods is jealousy. Aphrodite is jealous of Artemis because Hippolytus worships Artemis as the greatest of all gods, while he ignores Aphrodite. The gods are also evil and revengeful like humans. This can be seen when Aphrodite says, I ll wait till she loves a mortal next time, and with this hand with these unerring arrows I ll punish him. The redundant relationship between the gods is different. Over the course of the play, Artemis does not interfere in the actions of Aphrodite, which shows that the gods, while divine, do have restrictions.

After reading Bacchae and Hippolytus, many similarities and differences exist in the relationships of the characters. One similarity as stated above, are the tragedies caused by the gods to these characters. Another similarity is the god speaking the opening lines and expressing anger at not being worshipped. In addition, gods sometimes have anthropomorphic qualities as in the case of Dionsyus in Bacchae. In both Bacchae and Hippolytus, anthropomorphic qualities are maximized. In Hippolytus, jealousy is maximized.